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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0541  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//  
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//  
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STATE FOR SCA DAS FEIGENBAUM AND SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TX](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SCA DAS FEIGENBAUM'S JANUARY 10-13  
VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

REF: A. 06 ASHGABAT 1323 (WEEK AFTER NIYAZOV'S DEATH)

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT XXX (TOWN HALL)

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Embassy Ashgabat warmly welcomes DAS Feigenbaum and looks forward to a productive stay. Your visit, the second by a high-ranking State Department official since President Niyazov's death, will provide an opportunity to stress to Turkmenistan's top leadership that the United States looks forward to this historic opportunity to build a new relationship with Turkmenistan and wants to expand cooperation. In return, there must be strengthened respect for human rights and civil society. The fact that this is your first visit to Turkmenistan will help to underscore the U.S. desire for a fresh start in our bilateral relationship. End Summary.

Since A/S Boucher's Visit...

[1](#)2. (SBU)As reported ref a, the political situation continues to be stable since President Niyazov's death on December 21. Interim President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov and Minister of National Defense (and Secretary of the National Security Council) Agageldi

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Mammetgeldiyev have emerged as a power-sharing troika with the support of a National Security Council dominated by the "power ministries" (security, military and law enforcement bodies). The National Security Council currently has a superior role to the Council of Ministers, but is taking pains to avoid the impression that it is unilaterally running the country. And, indeed, as demonstrated by the multiple signatures under the many new decisions and edicts issued since Niyazov's death, a more collective decision-making process has emerged than was the case under Niyazov's one-man rule. More than any yearning for democracy or greater freedom, in the first instance, local citizens seem to be more concerned with stability and getting paid.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Turkmenistan's citizens have also been reassured by

the December 26 session of the constitution-changing Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), which decided that Turkmenistan's next president would be chosen by presidential elections (on February 11), rather than Halk Maslahaty vote. Although the body largely predetermined Berdimuhammedov's election by selecting five other, less experienced candidates and unanimously nominating the interim president, it nonetheless is making a well-intentioned effort to hold Turkmenistan's first competitive presidential election. Over the New Year's weekend, bulletin boards with pictures and resumes of all six candidates sprang up throughout Ashgabat; Berdimuhammedov and Deputy Minister of Oil and Gas Nuryev, two of the election candidates, held a televised question-and-answer session January 3 in Ashgabat (Ref xxx), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has agreed to a needs assessment mission by the Head of the Election Section at the OSCE's Office for Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights (ODIHR) -- all firsts for Turkmenistan. Berdimuhammedov's platform was surprisingly forward-leaning, and included: the possibility of free and cheap access to Internet for all citizens, pension reform, nearly free water, salt and gas, more student exchanges, a return to a mandatory 10 years of schooling, strong support for entrepreneurs and private business, and privatization of real property.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy welcomes your visit as a follow-on to Assistant Secretary Boucher's visit. We look to you to expand on Assistant Secretary Boucher's basic message -- that the United States wants to build a new relationship with Turkmenistan and will support a president emerging from a constitutional process for succession, but also that the United States remains concerned about Turkmenistan's human rights record. During recent meetings with Foreign Minister Meredov, Charge has stressed the need to resolve festering issues in order to pave the way for such a "new relationship."

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#### Road-Map for New Relationship

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¶5. (SBU) With this in mind, you should lay out in your meeting with Meredov a "road-map" for improved relations that identifies achievable actions aimed at addressing some basic U.S. interests and/or concerns:

-- Regular meetings with U.S. Embassy representatives to discuss/review human rights concerns.

-- A series of VIP visits to Turkmenistan, including Department of State, Department of Defense and inter-agency assistance delegations.

-- Comply with Jackson-Vanik by permitting free travel by Turkmenistan's citizens. As first steps, Turkmenistan should focus on resolving individual cases and making the "black list" more transparent.

-- Permit unimpeded testing for FLEX and other exchange programs and cease harassment of applicants.

-- Increase mandatory secondary education from 9 to 10 years.

-- Register independent, non-governmental, and private organizations, in accordance with standards set out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of which Turkmenistan is a participating state. As a beginning, Turkmenistan should register the Ahal Alumni Association, as well as ACCELS, IREX, and other U.S. NGOs that have been operating in Turkmenistan under the framework of the 1993 bilateral agreement.

-- Continue registration of minority religious groups and refrain from harassment and detention of members of those groups.

- Permit government employees to join professional organizations and non-governmental organizations.
- Permit the accreditation of more foreign journalists and allow citizens contact with foreign correspondents.
- Cease large-scale demolitions and offer the embassy assurances that the Berzengi neighborhood in which the Charge, Marine Security Guard and A/DCM live will not be torn down.
- Cease harassment and intimidation of U.S. Government grant assistance recipients.
- Sign the CAPACITY MOU.
- Stop disrupting American Corner activities and harassment and intimidation of citizens who attend American Corner events.
- Allow the Turkmenbashi American Corner to reopen.
- Complete the exchange of diplomatic notes regarding the Mary Divert program.

16. (SBU) As the Government of Turkmenistan makes progress on addressing these concerns, the United States could consider a calibrated increase of cooperation, keyed to Turkmenistan's social, economic and democratic development, drawing on the following areas:

- Medical Supplies: \$1 million in measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccines (approximately 2.1 million doses) and \$10,000 in tuberculosis laboratory reagents. Turkmenistan also has a critical need for 50 Olympus microscopes for clinical diagnosis (approximately \$60,000).
- Health Programs: Replace shortfall of approximately \$400,000 in latest FY07 projections, which forced cuts to health care reform project (ZdravPlus), Centers for Disease

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Control (CDC) and Central Asian Program on AIDS Control in Vulnerable Populations (CAPACITY) programs in Turkmenistan. Expand the TB Directly Observed Treatment Shortcourse (DOTS) program to another province (\$1,225,000). Expand Healthy Communities (\$150,000), Drug Demand Reduction (\$500,000), Live Birth Definitions (\$100,000) and Infectious Diseases (\$350,000) programs.

- Education: Increase the number of FLEX students (last year the USG funded 63 students from Turkmenistan) to at least 100. Increase the Undergraduate Program for Eurasia (UGRAD) from one to four years. Increase the number of participants in the Teachers Excellence and Achievement (TEA), Muskie Fellowship and Junior Faculty Development (JFDP) programs. Increase the number of Fulbright Fellows from Turkmenistan. Fund two additional American Corners in Balkanabat (Balkan Province) and Tejen (Ahal Province), for a total of seven corners. Fund four English Language Fellow (ELF) positions and assign a Regional English Language Officer to Embassy Ashgabat. Increase Peace Corps volunteers from 40 to 52 in the next year.

- Economic Development: Expand funding for USAID's upcoming AgLinks program (\$250,000). Expand economic development grants for communities in USAID's Community Empowerment project (\$250,000). Support bank officer loan training to provide micro-financing (\$300,000). Provide economic and energy policy assistance (\$500,000).

- Security Cooperation: Pursue CENTCOM funding for two additional border-crossing stations at Farap (on the Uzbekistan border) and Seraks (on the Iranian border) for a total of \$5 million. Provide counternarcotics communications equipment to assist the stations in communicating with

Ashgabat (\$5 million of CENTCOM funds). Buy additional portal monitors under the EXBS program (\$600,000). Double International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding from \$250,000 to \$500,000 (to permit more military officers to attend training in the United States. Increase Foreign Military Funding (FMF) from \$300,000 to \$900,000 to expand the English language instruction program.

17. (SBU) There remains tremendous paranoia here and in Central Asia in general about U.S. plans to foment a "colored revolution" and, in fact, Russia's black propaganda machine -- Russian television is watched by almost all citizens of Turkmenistan -- has been busy promoting suggestions that the United States is seeking to promote a "flour revolution" (referring to the flour reportedly being sent here by Turkmenistan's overseas opposition). Embassy suggests that discussion of cooperation for now be focused primarily on the issues most meaningful to the new leadership, including health, education, economic development and security. Overt "democracy-building" programs not only are unlikely to be approved, but also could call into question our desire to work productively with the new government.

18. (U) Post looks forward to working with you during your visit in order to ensure its success.

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